



THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

THE RED DRESS: The National Symbol for Women and Heart Disease Awareness

The Red Dress: A Red Alert

The Heart Truth introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in February 2003 as an attention-getting reminder that heart disease is the #1 killer of women. The Red Dress was designed to build awareness that women are at risk, give a sense of hope that women can reduce their risk and empower them to do so, and provide a clear call to action coupled with a sense of urgency.

The Red Dress symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self," especially her heart health. The Red Dress works as a visual red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

The Red Dress symbol is the centerpiece of *The Heart Truth*, a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Red Dress Collections: Bringing the Symbol to Life

Seeking to mobilize an industry intrinsically tied to female audiences to help launch the new symbol, *The Heart Truth* forged a groundbreaking collaboration between the Federal government and the fashion industry. As a result of this partnership, fashion leaders—including top designers, models, and celebrities—have demonstrated their support for the issue of women and heart disease by participating in *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collections.

The Heart Truth launched the Red Dress symbol at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in 2003, when 19 designers—from Vera Wang to Donna Karan to Oscar de la Renta—contributed red dresses to the Red Dress Collection 2003 for a stunning display under the tents. At Olympus Fashion Week in 2004, the Red Dress symbol came to life as the industry's top models walked the runway in red dresses created exclusively for *The Heart Truth* by 26 of the most prestigious designers in the business. In 2005, *The Heart Truth* returned to center stage to debut its Red Dress Collection 2005 at Olympus Fashion Week. Twenty-six celebrities—from Christie Brinkley to Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, to Vanessa Williams—united on the runway with legendary designers to showcase one-of-a-kind red gowns created for *The Heart Truth*.

National Wear Red Day

Each year, the President of the United States issues a proclamation declaring February American Heart Month. To support American Heart Month and the Red Dress symbol, *The Heart Truth* and many individuals and organizations celebrate National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of February each year. On this day, Americans nationwide wear red to join the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk of heart





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disease. Men and women can participate by wearing a red dress, shirt, tie, or the Red Dress Pin. The Red Dress Pin is available at www.hearttruth.gov.

First Ladies Red Dress Collection

The Heart Truth's First Ladies Red Dress Collection debuted in a special exhibit at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in May 2005. The Collection featured red dresses and suits worn by seven of America's First Ladies, including Laura Bush, the national ambassador for *The Heart Truth* campaign, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Claudia (Lady Bird) Johnson. Each First Lady contributed a red gown or suit from her personal collection.

What the Public is Saying about the Red Dress

Since its introduction in 2003, women around the country have rallied around the Red Dress and are celebrating the cause and taking ownership of the symbol. They are commissioning traveling exhibitions of its Red Dresses, around which they're creating diverse celebrations of women's heart health.

NHLBI has received numerous comments in support of the Red Dress. Here are just a few:

"The Red Dress is Short, Sassy & Sweet!! I'm a 52-year-old woman who had a heart attack 9 months ago; now after 4 stents and 4 trips to the hospital, I can't wait for something to wear for people to ask me about. I have heart disease and now feel I should have never had the first heart attack IF doctors had checked me earlier in life. It's like the pink ribbon for breast cancer, people will know what you are wearing and why."

"I feel blessed to be alive. I remembered Mrs. Bush's message about listening to our bodies and that more people should pay attention to the unique symptoms women who have heart problems have. I had trouble Monday night, tuned in to news reports on Mrs. Bush on Tuesday, and on Wednesday night I went to the hospital. Mrs. Bush has a beautiful platform—something truly worthwhile to promote to save lives—and I am very supportive of it."

"I had my heart attack at 30 years old. I am 5'4", 118 pounds, wear a size 6 dress, work out 5 times per week, do not smoke, and eat healthy. Not all women who have heart disease are overweight, smoke, and over 50. It does not matter what you wear or what size you are—this is the message the Red Dress Project sends. Can there be a more powerful symbol for a disease that affects 8 million women?"

For more information about *The Heart Truth*, its Red Dress symbol, or women and heart disease, visit www.hearttruth.gov.

